

Uncle Jesse's Mound



by Joshua Jones

photo credit: Ken Hastings

Never heard of Uncle Jesse's Mound? That could be because Uncle Jesse's Mound was renamed Memorial Hill in 1927. Jesse Hughes McCarrell, born in Louisiana 1825, owned modern day Memorial Hill. McCarrell was called a sturdy intrepid colonizer, according to the book, "How Beautiful Upon the Mountains." McCarrell had ten children who helped him farm area around the base of the mound. Many Midway residents referred to McCarrell as Uncle Jesse because of his pleasant demeanor.

Elijah Watkins later bought the land, who sold the property to Wasatch County for the purpose of establishing a veterans memorial. The state legislature levied local taxes in order to buy and build the memorial. David Broadbent drew plans and helped build the spiraling road and the potrock memorial which brass plaques where fit into. The plaques were inscribed with the veteran's names and the project was finished in 1927. Thieves later stole the plaques.

When the Memorial Hill was dedicated in 1929, Ammon VanWagoner along with the Wasatch High School Band played on top of the hill. He had to carry his drums up the trail on the side of the hill. There was no road around the hill at that time. He had to make two trips up and down carrying his drums.

For years the hill was forgotten and it fell into disrepair. The flag pole broke, lights were shot out and not replaced, graffiti adorned the pot rock surfaces once used to hold sacred plaques, roads became impassable to smaller cars and the hill began to have a notorious reputation for drug deals and parties.

That is, until 1990 when work began to restore Memorial Hill with help from County Public Works Director Kent Berg supervising the efforts to restore the road and replace the names. Now, ten years after the first attempt to restore, Midway resident and chairman of the Memorial Hill Restoration Project, Al Kohler is heading the project into its final hours. Kohler said local historian Dr. Raymond Green is finalizing a list war veterans which will be published in the Wave for review before Kohler has the names cast using donations he has collected. Terry Edwards, who Kohler describes as a "true workhorse," has recently finished the gate and arch into the Hill.

Recently, flag poles were fixed by Berg and Heber Light and Power fixed electrical equipment so that the flag could be illuminated at night. Also in the near future, Army Corp will lay pipe that was donated by Questar Gas Corporation to irrigate the top of the mountain which became an Eagle Scout Project to restore. Roads will be widened by the county to make them more passable. Kohler said this has been a worry for some time, since the single lane road can sometimes hardly accommodate single vehicles.

"This hill belongs to all of us," Kohler said, "everyone has been so great to work with. I am truly tickled that it is coming to a head very quickly."

Kohler said it wasn't possible without the ongoing efforts of many. "This is a decade worth of work by Dan Balstead and Dr. Green," he said.

Kohler said Zion's Bank account will still accept money that would help the project in its final days get completed, and he is also looking for laborers willing to work on the hill.

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